



COLORADO
WATER CONGRESS
INFORM | CONVENE | TRAIN | ACT

2026 Annual Convention

Wednesday, January 28th

Please note: this is a draft copy of the program. The final version will be available at the convention.

Registration Opens (8:00 a.m.)

Location: Outside Aurora Ballroom

Workshops (9:00 a.m.)

Workshop 1: Demystifying Active Forest Management in Colorado

Healthy forests are critical for climate resilience and safeguarding our water supplies—constituting our largest storage reservoir, regulating stream flows, and removing sediment. Yet, Colorado's forests and our water are increasingly vulnerable to catastrophic wildfires. Active forest management is key to reducing risk, protecting watersheds, and restoring resilience—but where do you start? Join our panel of experts in water quality, forest health and restoration as they demystify the process and share practical strategies for setting priorities, building partnerships, and scaling up treatments.

Workshop 2: Invasive Species Threatening Infrastructure: Assessing the Level of Threat and the Level of Resources to Address It

Zebra, quagga, and the golden mussels are aquatic nuisance species (ANS) that can have significant impacts to water infrastructure and delivery systems. Colorado has recently experienced a dramatic increase in zebra mussel positive waters in western Colorado. While a large majority of the State is not currently dealing with mussel infestations, aquatic nuisance species are an ongoing concern for all surface waters in Colorado. In 2025, several adult mussel settlements were discovered in Mesa, Garfield, and Eagle Counties, including the Colorado River from its confluence with the Eagle River downstream to the Utah state line. This workshop panel will discuss what the Colorado Parks and Wildlife Aquatic Nuisance Species Program is doing to locate, mitigate, and contain mussel settlements, as well as efforts by other western states to avoid future infestation.

Workshop 3: Colorado Bar Association Water Law Section

WORKING TIMELINE



COLORADO
WATER CONGRESS
INFORM | CONVENE | TRAIN | ACT

2026 Annual Convention

Wednesday, January 28th

Sessions (beginning 12:45 p.m. Jan. 28)

Location: Aurora Ballroom (unless otherwise indicated)

12:45 PM Opening Remarks

- Christine Arbogast, President, Colorado Water Congress
- Chané Polo, Executive Director, Colorado Water Congress

Fred Mosqueda, Arapaho Language and Culture Program Coordinator, Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes of Oklahoma

More Storage: The Critical Need For It, and How Population Growth, Drought and Cost Stand in the Way

Water in storage is like money in the bank: that feeling that you have the resources when you need them the most. But increasing our existing storage capacity isn't easy. Our speakers will offer a frank discussion on the challenges.

2:15 PM Dr. Andrea Travnicek, Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, Department of the Interior

2:15 PM Break

3:00 PM Storage Advantages Beyond Consumptive Use Benefits: Cases in Point

In a future of tighter water supplies and hotter summers, strategic high-elevation storage and coordinated release programs offer a smarter way to manage every drop. By timing releases when rivers and communities need them most, these efforts support ecosystems, recreation, and local economies. The Yampa River Basin shows what's possible: recent high-elevation releases from Stagecoach and Elkhead Reservoirs added thousands of acre-feet to sustain flows, cool water temperatures, and support continued ag production. This panel will explore how that success story, and the "do more with less" mindset behind it, can guide water management across Colorado's headwaters.

4:00 PM Phil Weiser, Colorado Attorney General

4:15 PM TBD

5:00 PM POND Reception

Open to All Attendees

WORKING TIMELINE



2026 Annual Convention

January 29th, 2026 (beginning 7:00 a.m.)

7:00 AM Morning Welcome: Chané Polo, Colorado Water Congress Executive Director

7:05 AM 2026 Legislative Priorities: Dialogue with Colorado Legislators

8:00 AM TBD

8:45 AM Status of the Colorado River

9:45 AM Telling Their Stories: Producers Are Stewards of the Land

Colorado's ag producers benefit from storage. But they do more than use consumptively; they are the best stewards of our lands. In this panel, they will tell their stewardship stories.

10:45 AM Break

11:00 AM Smarter Tools for a Tougher Future: Agri-Tech to Support Farmers and Irrigators in the Arid West

Why do we have to develop Agri-technology? Because the challenges facing agriculture are outpacing the tools we've traditionally used to solve them. Water scarcity, labor shortages, climate variability, rising input costs ... the need to sustain both productivity and natural resources are all converging at once. Producers can't simply "work harder" to keep up.

12:00 PM Lunch

1:00 PM What Watershed Health Legislative Initiatives are Coming in 2026?

Two congressional staff immersed in watershed health will discuss what legislation might emerge in Congress this year.

WORKING TIMELINE



2026 Annual Convention

January 29th, 2026 (continued)

1:45 PM Let's Not Forget Conveyance: It Is Critical Infrastructure, Too

Building storage also requires building delivery systems to move the water from the bucket to the agriculture lands and the domestic water providers.

2:45 PM How Does Population Growth in Our Cities Increase the Need for Storage and Supply?

With more people moving to our state, and the larger cities in particular, what are the pressures to build storage or conveyance from non-domestic uses to municipal supplies?

3:15 PM Career Accelerator Discussion

A conversation with the newest 2026 Career Accelerator Recipients on their vision of the future of water.

3:35 PM Break

3:50 PM Beyond Water: *Legacy*, Stories of Courage and Hope in the Face of Agriculture's Challenges

The film Legacy documents the rewarding, joyful, and sometimes painful experiences of those in Colorado agriculture. It was created in collaboration with the Colorado Department of Agriculture, the Colorado Farm Bureau, and other state experts and organizations like the Colorado Agrability Project. The goal is to help destigmatize mental health in rural areas and highlight what we can all be doing to look out for ourselves and our ag communities.

Following the film, please join in a conversation with several of the people highlighted.

WORKING TIMELINE



2026 Annual Convention

January 30th, 2026 (beginning 8:00 a.m.)

8:00 AM Steve Lohr, Acting Associate Chief over Natural Resources, United States Forest Service

8:30 AM Data Centers

9:30 AM Greg Morrison, Executive Vice President, National Water Resources Association

9:45 AM Break

10:15 AM Bureau of Reclamation's Small Storage Program

10:45 AM Colorado Congressional Delegation

Each attending member will discuss their 2026 water priority.

11:45 AM Closing Remarks

- Christine Arbogast, President, Colorado Water Congress
- Chané Polo, Executive Director, Colorado Water Congress

12:00 PM Wayne N. Aspinall Award Session

Recognition of former Aspinall winners Harold Miskel and Lewis Entz.

Presentation of the 2026 Wayne N. Aspinall Award by 2025 Recipient Russel George.